

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0025 EA

Project Name: West End Uncompahgre Field Office Livestock Crossing Permits

Location: The project area is in west end of the Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO), including portions of Montrose and San Miguel Counties, Colorado. Livestock crossing permits authorize the movement of livestock across Public Lands, and occur outside of existing grazing permits.

Applicant: BLM and Livestock Grazing Permittees

Background

In July of 2012 the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office, issued Instructional Memorandum (IM) 2012-031. The purpose of this IM is to provide guidance concerning the issuance of livestock crossing permits resulting from applications to cross public lands from current livestock grazing permittees/lessees and non permittees/lessees.

In February 2012, the BLM UFO solicited the local community for their knowledge of livestock crossing routes which include Public Land in the west end of the UFO, and their interest in applying for crossing permits in future grazing seasons. Again in January 2013, livestock operators in the local area, including current BLM grazing permittees, were asked to submit applications for livestock crossing routes that they expect to use in the future so that the BLM could prepare to respond to such requests.

The Uncompahgre Field Office has completed Environmental Assessment (EA) # DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0025, which analyzes the effects of issuing livestock crossing permits on known routes.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2013-0025 EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The proposed action includes mitigation measures which are listed in the Design Features section of the EA.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context

The west end of the UFO consists of approximately 325,000 acres of Public Land grazing allotments, which is interspersed and intermingled with privately owned, state, and other federally managed land. There are 80 grazing allotments on the west end of the UFO. Some of the intermingled state and private lands are cooperatively managed with Public Land. Permitted active grazing use in the project area is about 12,500 AUMs. Other Public Land uses in the area include permitted mining, oil, and gas extraction as well as recreational activities such as hunting, hiking, camping, mountain biking, and recreational motorized vehicle use.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Beneficial impacts of this project would be the formal issuance of Livestock Crossing Permits which include special Terms and Conditions which would mitigate identified impacts to Public Land resources. Past practices for permitting livestock crossing have been inconsistent; a primary benefit of this project is the establishment of a standardized system for the application, issuance, and/or denial of crossing applications.

Prior to issuing any crossing permit, the BLM will ensure that the annual number of livestock and annual number of times a route (or route segment) has been used does not exceed what has been analyzed in the Proposed Action. Resource protection stipulations specific to each route will be incorporated based on analysis. Terms and Conditions for each crossing permit will be included as needed for items such as special status species and their habitat, wildlife, cultural sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and standards for rangeland health.

Adverse impacts could occur to if there are conflicts between motor vehicle users and livestock operators conducting a crossing event. Other adverse impacts could occur in the form of slightly increased forage utilization and soil and vegetation trampling along crossing routes, and potential impact to right-of-ways.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

There is potential conflict between livestock operators and motor vehicle users, especially on paved county roads. Livestock operators frequently employ pilot cars to warn oncoming traffic of crossing events on paved county roads. Potential impacts to public health and safety are not anticipated to be at a level that is significant.

3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no potential impacts have been identified. There are three recorded historic resources within the project area: the Paradox Stock Driveway, the Monogram Stock Driveway and the Ketchemup Trail. The Monogram and Paradox Stock Driveways have been determined to be ineligible for nomination to the National Register. The Ketchemup Trail is considered to be Eligible for Nomination to the National Register as a historic livestock trail.

The project area includes one Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The San Miguel Area of Critical Environmental Concern is located along the San Miguel River, between Horsefly and Leopard Creek. It was designated for the protection of unique riparian resources, protection of scenic values, and recreation management. Livestock crossing would not affect the values for which this ACEC was established.

There are currently no waterways designated as Wild and Scenic under the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS). However, approximately 17.5 miles of the proposed crossing routes are within the river study corridors of segments determined to be eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS. The overall impact from livestock crossing would be low is not anticipated to affect preliminary classifications of stream segments, or threaten outstandingly remarkable values.

There are no Wilderness Areas, Prime or Unique Farmlands, wetlands or lands with wilderness characteristics within the project area.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There is expected to be little if any public controversy with the proposal.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The proposed action is not unique for this area as livestock crossing has occurred on all known routes in the past. The effects have been reasonably predictable, and effects from the proposed action would not be classified as highly uncertain or involving unique or unknown risks.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action would not set a precedent for issuing future Livestock Crossing Permits for routes not analyzed in the EA. Issuance of crossing permits on routes not analyzed in the EA would have to be evaluated on their own merits.

7) Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Other activities, including permitted grazing, recreation, oil and gas and mineral extraction are foreseeable but it is not anticipated that cumulative impacts of any significance would occur.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no significant impacts to districts, sites, highways, structures, or potential loss or destruction of significant scientific resources, have been identified. If any unidentified sites are discovered mitigation measures would be in place to avoid adverse impacts.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

All threatened, endangered, candidate and sensitive species known to occur in the analysis area were considered in the EA. For some species, impacts to individuals may occur but would not likely adversely affect any population.

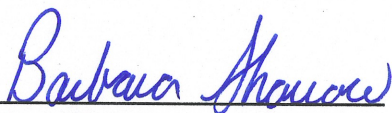
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action does not threaten violation of any laws or regulations imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:


Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

9-18-13
Date